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ABSTRACT

A study of women's information-seeking behavior with regard to the purchase of cosmetics was conducted to determine the effects on their behavior of six individual variables (ambiguity about cosmetic products, price consciousness, income, amount of money spent on cosmetics, age, and education) and six social variables (perceived social utility of cosmetics, interest in interpersonal discussion about cosmetics, amount of personal interaction engaged in, comparative interest in cosmetics, perception of similarity of product preferences to those of friends, and role in transmitting information to others). The subjects were 206 respondents who completed questionnaires randomly distributed to women users of cosmetics in Madison, Wisconsin. Analysis of the results indicated that the strongest predictors of information-seeking behavior among the individual variables were ambiguity about cosmetic products, age, and education, and that the strongest predictors among the social variables were perceived social utility of cosmetics, interest in interpersonal discussion about cosmetics, and perception of similarity of product preferences to those of friends. (Tables of results are provided.) (GW)

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Theory and Methodology
Division

# CONSUMER INFORMATION USE: INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIAL PREDICTORS

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## INTRODUCTION

Marketing studies have traditionally sought explanations for information seeking on the level of personal or product characteristics such as age and product complexity (Katona and Mueller, 1955; LeGrand and Udell, 1964; Newman and Staelin, 1972). Implicit in these studies were the assumptions that the consumer's communication behavior occurs in isolation from the rest of his social life (Kover, 1967; Wackman, 1973) and that he uses information to resolve some internal problem such as reduction of uncertainty or post-purchase dissonance (Chaffee and McLeod, 1973). However, recent research in disciplinary areas suggests that the person's information-seeking behavior is not an isolated event in his life and that explanations for information seeking can often be best achieved on the interpersonal level of analysis, that is, on the basis of a person's perception of his acquaintances and how they view the object of information (Chaffee, 1972; Clarke, 1971, 1973; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973; Ward and Gibson, 1969; Rees and Paisley, 1967).

This study focuses on the effects of the consumer's interpersonal or social variables on his information-seeking behavior. It also compares the power of this type of variables with commonly used individual characteristics.

## BACKGROUND

Several models of interpersonal perception assume that the individual's behavior is not simply a function of his own private world; it is based upon his perceptions of the orientations held by others around him and his orientations to them (Newcomb, 1953; Laing et al.,

1966; Scheff, 1967; Chaffee and McLeod, 1968). These models seek an explanation for a person's communication behavior on the level of his interpersonal or social relations.

Previous research suggests that an explanation for one's information-seeking behavior may be found on the level of his social relations. For example, one may seek information from the mass media to form impressions of the kind of people who buy certain products or brands, and he may develop associations of specific products with various life styles (Ogilvy, 1963; Ward and Wackman, 1971). These "social utility" reasons for paying attention to the media may provide a means of conforming to the perceived expectations of others, that is, gauging what others will think if certain behaviors occur (Ward and Gibson, 1969; Clarke, 1973).

Individuals may also seek information to provide a basis for later interpersonal communication. Such "communication-utility" motivations may apply to situations where one is interested in discussing the subject matter with friends and perceives great likelihood for future discussion of the topic due to the frequency of his interaction with others (Chaffee and McLeod, 1973; Rees and Paisley, 1967).

Some previous research also suggests that individuals may seek information for social comparison reasons. Such motivations are supported by Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison and appear to be at work when the person perceives himself to be similar to others on given attributes (Jones and Gerard, 1967; Clarke, 1973; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973). Social comparison increases the stability of a person's evaluations and offers an occasion for expressing affection and other interpersonal rewards (Clarke, 1971, 1973; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973).

Finally, one may seek information for the purpose of transmitting it to others. For example, an "opinion leader" may wish to obtain information about products from Consumer Reports to influence others by showing connoisseurship, suggesting status or asserting superiority (Whyte, 1955; Dichter, 1966). Such an anticipatory "role" may condition the person's information-seeking behavior (Tipton, 1970; Atkin, 1972).

On the basis of the findings of these studies we decided to test the power of such social types of variables and compare them with the commonly used individual characteristics in predicting two dimensions of consumer information-seeking behavior: amounts and types of information used by buyers of cosmetics. Cosmetics seemed an attractive product category to investigate mainly due to lack of information-seeking role structures, which are present in the purchasing process of several types of products (Engel et al., 1973, p. 411), and because users of cosmetics are likely to be concerned with the kinds of products they buy and, therefore, are willing to seek information.

In the present research our focus was on six "individual" and six "social" variables. On the basis of previous research findings we expected the following individual variables to correlate with information-seeking behavior:

1. Perceived-product ambiguity
2. Price consciousness
3. Income
4. Money spent on cosmetics
5. Age
6. Education

These are fairly typical of the kinds of variables commonly used in studies of consumer information-seeking behavior (Engel et al., 1973; Newman and Staelin, 1972; Newman and Lockeman, 1972). In addition, we expected that, on the basis of the results of studies reviewed earlier, information seeking would be related to the following six social variables:

1. Social utility
2. Interest in interpersonal discussion
3. Personal interaction
4. Comparative interest
5. Comparative-product preference
6. Opinion leadership

The social utility variable was a construct of interpersonal perceptions with respect to the social relevance of cosmetics to the respondent (Ward and Gibson, 1969; Ward and Wackman, 1971; Clarke, 1973). Interest in interpersonal discussion and personal interaction were variables designed to tap the person's communication utility of information (Chaffee and McLeod, 1973; Rees and Paisley, 1967). Comparative interest in cosmetics and comparative-product preference were operational definitions of the person's social comparison (Clarke, 1971, 1973; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973). Opinion leadership might seem an individual variable, but when one considers opinion leaders' motivations for information seeking (Engel et al., 1973) it is probably more properly classed as an index of one's social role in transmitting information to others (Atkin, 1970; Tipton, 1972).

## METHODOLOGY

Data for the present study were collected via questionnaires randomly distributed to women users of cosmetics in Madison, Wisconsin (population 170,000), during the month of November 1974. Sampling procedures involved random selection of women shoppers in parking lanes and stalls in the city's three main shopping centers plus patrons of selected stores in the downtown shopping area. Female shoppers were approached during various days of the week and at varied business hours and asked if they were using cosmetics. If the answer to this question was "yes," they were asked to complete a short survey at home and return it promptly in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Questionnaires were issued to 408 shoppers who agreed to cooperate.

The questionnaires contained a list of 19 cosmetic products with a blank for "others"; respondents were asked to check those products that they had been buying and using. A respondent was included in the final sample if she indicated that she had bought and used at least three of the following five cosmetic products: perfume, face makeup base, hand cream or lotion, lipstick, and at least one eye makeup product. The selection of these products was made on the basis of the following: (1) previous factor analyses of cosmetics performed by Wells (1967) using large national samples; (2) interviews with salespeople; and (3) a pretest. It was thought that these five products were fairly representative of the kinds of cosmetic products women most often use.[1] The final sample used in this study consisted of 206 respondents.

Dependent Measures

Because information seeking occurs at various points in time, including prior to each purchase, consumers have various amounts of information about available products stored in their memory at any given point in time (Engel, et al., 1966; Claxton et al., 1974), and when they are exposed to information about products they are likely to look or ask for something they do not already know (Chaffee and McLeod, 1973; Engel et al., 1973). This makes the task of measuring a person's information-seeking behavior very difficult (Newman and Slaelin, 1972).

In order to overcome this problem, information seeking was defined in this study as "an expressed need to find out something regardless of how available that 'something' is" (Clarke, 1971, p. 355), assuming that those who have the need for information will attend to it when they are given the opportunity to do so.[2]

The respondent's need to find out something she does not already know about cosmetics was measured by asking her to select from a list those pieces of information she would like to know before buying a new brand of each of the five selected products (perfume, eye makeup, face makeup base, hand cream, and lipstick). The list consisted of six items which were selected for the questionnaire from a pretest and was developed on the basis of previous research findings and interviews with sales personnel. Appendix A lists the items that were used to measure information seeking and corresponding measures used in previous studies.

Indexes of the amount of information consumers requested on products were constructed by summing responses across the six items.[3] Indexes for each of the six types of information were constructed by summing

responses across the five products. A general index of information seeking was also constructed by aggregating specific measures. This index had a mean value of 9.6, a standard deviation of 5.4 and a range of 0 to 28, values which are very comparable to information-seeking scores reported by Newman and Slaelin (1972).

Independent Measures

The price consciousness scale consisted of four items similar to those used by Wells and Tigert (1971). A typical item of this scale was: "I find myself checking the prices of even small cosmetic items," with the respondent expected to state the extent to which she agreed or disagreed on a five-point Likert type scale. All four items loaded significantly on one factor and had a split-half reliability coefficient of .75.

The perceived-product ambiguity scale was similarly constructed by summing four items that loaded significantly on the hypothesized factor. Two typical items of this scale were: "I often find it hard to decide which cosmetic products best suit me" and "I cannot tell the difference between brands of most cosmetic products I buy." This scale had a reliability coefficient of .76.

The social utility scale consisted of four items that loaded heavily on the hypothesized factor. Two typical items of this scale were: "I think other women often form impressions of me on the basis of cosmetics I use," and "I am often concerned with the kind of impression friends may form of me because of the cosmetics I use," with the respondent expected to indicate the extent to which she agreed or disagreed on a

five-point Likert type scale. This scale had a split-half reliability coefficient of .81.

Interest in interpersonal discussion about cosmetics was measured by asking the respondent to indicate on a five-point "strongly agree-strongly disagree" scale whether she "likes to talk about cosmetics with friends." The respondent's personal exposure to people with whom she is likely to be discussing cosmetics was an index of informal personal exposure (Reynolds and Darden, 1971); the respondent was asked to indicate the approximate time (in hours and minutes) she "spends with friends or neighbors (away from work) on the average day of the week."

Since social comparison involves "comparing oneself to those individuals with whom he is similar on given attributes" (Festinger, 1954; Jones and Gerard, 1967), an approximate measure of one's social comparison is believed to be the extent to which one perceives himself to be similar with others on such attributes (Jones and Gerard, 1967; O'Keefe, 1973). Two variables were used that have been suggested by previous writers (Clarke, 1971, 1973; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973). The first variable was the person's comparative-product preference, that is, the extent to which the respondent perceives her product preferences to be similar to those of her friends. This variable was measured by asking the respondent to indicate on a five-point "strongly agree-strongly disagree" scale whether "several cosmetic items she owned were similar to those of her friends." The second measure was the person's comparative interest in cosmetics. This variable was measured by asking the respondent to

indicate on a similar five-point scale whether she was "more interested in cosmetics than most of her friends."[4] This measure was transformed into a three-point scale with low values assigned to the extreme ends of the original scale.

Finally, the opinion leadership variable consisted of four items similar to those used in previous studies (King and Summers, 1967; Rogers and Cartano, 1962; Reynolds and Darden, 1971) that loaded significantly on the hypothesized factor. A typical item on this scale was: "My friends or neighbors often ask my advice about cosmetics." Responses were recorded on a five-point "strongly agree-strongly disagree" Likert type scale. This scale had a split-half reliability coefficient of .88.

Information was also obtained from respondents on their age, income, education, and the approximate amount of money spent on cosmetics in 1974. Transformations were made on the income scale to account for the middle-income consumers' tendency to use more information than consumers in other income categories (Engel et al., 1973).

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows correlations of the independent variables with each of the twelve criterion measures. Approximately half of these correlations are significantly different from zero (P = .05).

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Table 1 about here.

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Of the 64 significant relationships reported, approximately two-thirds are correlations between social variables and the criterion

measures. The ratio of social-to-individual significant relationships is even higher (2 to 1) at the .01 level.

To assess the relative importance of the independent variables in accounting for variance in the criterion measures, stepwise analyses were run on each one of the dependent measures, extracting only those variables that correlated at the .10 level of significance.

Tables 2 and 3 contain stepwise regression data for the amount and type of information sought. Each table shows variables in order of entry into stepwise regression for each information-seeking measure. Table 2 shows predictors of amounts of information requested on each of the five products as well as the aggregate information-seeking index. Table 3 shows predictors of the types of information desired by respondents. The tables also report multiple correlation coefficients at each step of the regression analysis and the beta coefficients indicating the relative importance of each predictor in the respective regression.

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Tables 2 and 3 about here.

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Individual Predictors

The individual predictors accounted for significant variance in the amount of information consumers requested on products and the type of information desired. The strongest predictor among this set of variables was perceived-product ambiguity. It appeared in nearly all equations. Specifically, this variable was a powerful predictor of the consumer's desire to obtain information on face makeup base and the total

amount of information requested on the five cosmetic products, accounting for over half of the variance in each case. Perceved-product ambiguity was also a fairly good predictor of information requested on eye makeup and hand cream (Table 2). The data appear to be in line with Cox's (1967) reasoning, suggesting that those consumers who are confronted with ambiguity or uncertainty seek additional information in order to understand the context in which a decision must be made.

Perceived-product ambiguity was also a good predictor of the consumer's desire for specific types of information (Table 3). Those who appeared to be confronted with product ambiguity tended to request "brand"-related information, perhaps as a means of reducing risk (Bauer, 1960). They are also more likely to turn to "experts" (e.g., salespeople). The latter finding appears to be consistent with data reported by Coleman and others (1959) and findings of informational social influence reported by Deutsch and Gerard (1955) and Bauer (1960).

Another individual predictor was age. This variable was more powerful in predicting quantity of information desired by consumers on products rather than any specific type of information. The data suggest that older people are least likely to seek information on cosmetics, and they are least likely to seek information from friends. Similar findings have been reported by Katona and Mueller (1955) and Newman and Staelin (1972).

Education was another variable that was negatively related to information seeking in all three equations in which it appeared. Specifically, the data suggest that the more formal education a cosmetics user has, the less interested she is in seeking information on product

attributes, or in examining the consumption behavior of others. This finding contradicts results reported by Katona and Mueller (1955); but is it partially supported by Newman and Staelin's (1972) findings on prepurchase information seeking for new cars and major household appliances.

Social Predictors

Among the social variables tested, social utility was the strongest predictor of the respondent's information-seeking behavior; it appeared in more than half of the equations and was a fairly good predictor of both dimensions of the consumer's communication behavior examined. Specifically the social-utility variable predicted very well the amount of information consumers wanted to know about perfume, suggesting that the extent to which consumers consider others' perceptions in a purchase decision may be mediated by the "visbility" of the product in social relations. This influence process appears to affect their information-seeking behavior. Similar findings have been reported by Ward and Gibson (1969). Social utility was also a good predictor of the amount of information consumers requested on hand cream, suggesting that social influence processes may also operate in non-visible consumption situations.

It also appears that the amount of importance a consumer attaches to the various types of information is related to her perceptions of how others evaluate certain consumption behaviors. The social-utility variable predicted very well the consumer's need for finding out possible life styles associated with certain brands. This finding is also consistent with similar lines of reasoning regarding the symbolic meaning

consumers attach to products and brands (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). What factor(s) motivated the respondents to find out about brands carried by specific stores is not very clear. Perhaps, they feel that others judge them on the basis of the store from which they buy their cosmetics (Levy, 1966, p. 153); they may also be judging brands on the basis of the type of store that carries them, as a means of reducing social risk (Bauer, 1960).

The respondent's interest in interpersonal discussion was another strong predictor. Tables 2 and 3 shows that this variable was a better predictor for amounts of information requested on some products (perfume, lipstick, and face makeup base) and for certain types of information (FOVB). Thus, those consumers who are interested in discussing the subject with their friends seem to find information more useful than their counterparts. This finding suggests that information may be sought to be "shared" with others. The high correlation between this variable and the respondent's need to "check" with friends before she buys new cosmetic items further suggests that interpersonal communication may focus a great deal on reinforcing one another's behavior, a practice that would make for pleasant conversations (Chaffee and McLeod, 1973; Clarke, 1973), or that she may have the need to conform to the perceived expectations of others, a situation that would also create further pleasant discussions (Clarke, 1971).

Comparative-product preference was also a fairly good predictor of information seeking; it was most significant in accounting for variance in the respondent's desire to obtain friends' opinions prior to purchase. The data suggest that those consumers who tend to view their present

consumption preferences as being similar to those of their friends are more likely to have the need to compare their evaluations of new consumption situations to the evaluations of their friends. Although this finding is in accord with the social comparison theory, the data could not provide information about the direction of causality.

The remaining social variables were less powerful predictors. Informal personal exposure and comparative interest accounted for very little variance. Opinion leadership did not enter into any one of the equations, although it was fairly well correlated with several dependent measures (Table 1). A possible explanation for this might be the high intercorrelation of this variable with other equally strong social predictors such as social utility ($r = .38$) and interest in interpersonal discussion ($r = .42$).

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that the consumer's information-seeking behavior is not an isolated event in his life. One may seek information on products not only to resolve internal problems triggered by individual or product characteristics, but also to use this information to fulfill social needs arising during product consumption and interaction with other members of the society. These findings are in line with results of previous studies (Rees and Paisley, 1967; Clarke, 1973; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973).

The relative significance of the social and individual variables used in accounting for variance in our information-seeking measures was about equal, since, in examining the results of all twelve regressions,

it can be seen that of those variables that were significant in predicting various aspects of the respondent's information-seeking behavior about half were "individual" and half "social." These data do not support findings of previous studies of information seeking which favored social variables (Rees and Paisley, 1967; Chaffee and McLeod, 1973).

Although it would seem reasonable to assume that the relative importance of social-over-individual variables in explaining one's information-seeking behavior is a function of product visibility or the kind of information under consideration (Ward and Gibson, 1969), these data do not adequately support this line of reasoning. For example, the social-utility variable was strongly related to the respondent's need for information on brands of products (face makeup base and hand cream) for which brand names are unidentifiable, and her need to find out about the store(s) selling various brands. This finding suggests that group influence may operate in nonvisible consumption situations because it is possible that people may develop associations between brands of nonvisible products or stores that carry them and the kinds of people who use such products or shop at certain stores; and they may gauge what others will think about them as persons because of their brand preferences, if they are asked to talk about their consumption habits. Findings on information seeking about pop music reported by Clarke (1973) follow this line of reasoning. If future research produced similar results it would be useful to develop a typology of products that are susceptible to social influence, using criteria other than product visibility (Wackman, 1973).

These findings also suggest that a person may seek information to use in future interpersonal discussions. However, it is not clear whether

these correlations indicate a "flow" of information, "opinion leadership," "reinforcement," or other types of social motivations (Engel et al., 1973). It could be useful to determine the kinds of information a person seeks on products to "share" with others (Clarke, 1973). Research in this area could shed additional light into the product diffusion process.

Investigation into the reasons consumers seek information from personal sources and engage in social comparisons would also be useful. The findings in this study suggest that social comparison processes may be at work when the individual is uncertain about the correctness of her judgment and when she has the need for expressing personal affection. To the extent that the marketer would know the nature of social influence related to his product he could be able to determine the kinds of information that are relevant to consumers and sources through which such information should be made available to them.

Future research in this area should investigate similar and additional social variables, preferably in the laboratory (Tipton, 1970). Such research could reveal products for which information satisfies needs after the purchase, motivations for social uses of information, and the kind of information that is diffused in the system. Such information could assist marketers in designing effective communication campaigns and could suggest to them the kinds of information that should be made available to various segments of the market at different points in time and perhaps through what channels.

It is also possible that additional individual predictors can be used to account for variations in a consumer's information-seeking

behavior. But this kind of predictor has been widely used by marketing and communication researchers for some years with few impressive findings in terms of "variance accounted for," even when powerful statistical techniques were applied (Newman and Staelin, 1972). It seems reasonable to focus more research attention to social predictors where the prospect looks at least as promising.

## APPENDIX A

### ITEMS OF PRODUCT-INFORMATION-SEEKING INDEX

| Item | Previous Corresponding Measure | Study |
|---|---|---|
| 1. "Friends' opinions of various brands" (FOVB) | Number of out-of-store informal personal sources contacted | Katona and Mueller (1955), LeGrand and Udell (1964), Newman and Staelin (1972), Claxton et al. (1974) |
| 2. "Main differences between brands" (MDBB) | The extent to which consumers sought information on product attributes | Katona and Mueller (1955), Newman and Staelin (1972), Newman and Lockeman (1972), Claxton et al. (1974) |
| 3. "Available brands on the market" (ABOM) | Number of brands considered | Dommermuth (1965), Claxton et al. (1974) |
| 4. "Salesperson's opinion of various brands" (SOVB) | The extent to which respondents requested information from salespersons | Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), Claxton et al. (1974) |
| 5. "Brands carried by a particular store" (BCPS) | Number of stores visited | Katona and Mueller (1955), LeGrand and Udell (1964), Newman and Staelin (1972), Claxton et al. (1974) |
| 6. "What kind of people buy certain brands" (KPBB) | The extent to which a shopper examined the consumption behavior of other consumers | Katona and Mueller (1955), Ward and Gibson (1969) |

Table 1

PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN INFORMATION-SEEKING MEASURES AND THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

| Predictor | Dependent Measure: Amount of Information Requested | | | | | | Dependent Measure: Type of Information Requested | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Per-fume | Eye Makeup | Face Makeup Base | Hand-Cream | Lip-stick | General Index | FOVB | MDBB | ABOM | SOVB | BCPS | KPBB |
| Individual | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Product Ambiguity | .25 | .20 | .28 | .16 | .19 | .33 | .15 | .12 | .22 | .31 | .17 | .27 |
| Price Consciousness | .27 | .04 | .13 | -.05 | -.02 | .11 | .08 | .15 | .06 | -.02 | .09 | .04 |
| Income | -.07 | -.00 | .07 | -.05 | -.02 | -.01 | -.06 | .11 | .08 | -.07 | -.10 | -.03 |
| Money spent on cosmetics | .08 | .01 | .04 | .03 | .09 | .07 | .01 | -.01 | .07 | .08 | .07 | .03 |
| Age | -.20 | -.12 | -.21 | -.03 | -.12 | -.21 | -.16 | -.13 | -.21 | -.02 | -.15 | -.11 |
| Education | -.16 | -.29 | -.17 | -.04 | -.00 | -.21 | -.06 | -.16 | -.15 | -.09 | -.11 | -.27 |
| Social | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Utility | .39 | .12 | .24 | .17 | .13 | .31 | .20 | .10 | .19 | .19 | .21 | .28 |
| Interest in discussion | .33 | .19 | .25 | .13 | .23 | .32 | .35 | .11 | .19 | .17 | .21 | .20 |
| Personal Exposure | .09 | .19 | .13 | -.03 | -.05 | .11 | .08 | -.00 | .06 | .01 | .09 | .19 |
| Comparative preference | .15 | .19 | .24 | .07 | .12 | .23 | .27 | -.00 | .10 | .21 | .12 | .18 |
| Comparative interest | .22 | .09 | .12 | .11 | .11 | .19 | .15 | .00 | .17 | .13 | .11 | .15 |
| Opinion Leadership | .30 | .12 | .19 | .00 | .10 | .21 | .19 | .04 | .11 | .13 | .21 | .09 |

Correlations of about .14 and .18 are significantly different from zero at .05 and .01 level respectively.

Table 2

STEPWISE PREDICTIONS OF AMOUNT OF INFORMATION SOUGHT ON SELECTED COSMETIC PRODUCTS

| Product | Predictor Variable | R | Beta Coefficient | Level of Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perfume | Social Utility | .39 | .31 | .000 |
| | Interest in Interpersonal Discussion | .47 | .18 | .000 |
| | Perceived-Product Ambiguity | .50 | .16 | .002 |
| | Price Consciousness | .52 | .12 | .034 |
| | Age | .53 | -.11 | .047 |
| | Comparative Interest | .54 | .10 | .095 |
| Eye Makeup | Age | .30 | -.27 | .000 |
| | Perceived-Product Ambiguity | .39 | .20 | .000 |
| | Comparative-Product Preference | .41 | .15 | .021 |
| | Education | .43 | -.11 | .083 |
| Face Makeup Base | Perceived-Product Ambiguity | .28 | .19 | .000 |
| | Social Utility | .36 | .18 | .001 |
| | Interest in Interpersonal Discussion | .40 | .14 | .013 |
| | Comparative-Product Preference | .42 | .16 | .041 |
| | Age | .44 | -.14 | .045 |
| | Income | .45 | .11 | .096 |
| Hand Cream | Social Utility | .17 | .16 | .014 |
| | Perceived-Product Ambiguity | .23 | .15 | .025 |
| Lipstick | Interest in Interpersonal Discussion | .22 | .20 | .001 |
| | Perceived-Product Ambiguity | .27 | .15 | .027 |
| General Index | Perceived-Product Ambiguity | .33 | .24 | .000 |
| | Social Utility | .44 | .22 | .000 |
| | Interest in Interpersonal Discussion | .49 | .20 | .000 |
| | Age | .51 | -.15 | .020 |
| | Comparative-Product Preference | .52 | .11 | .089 |

TABLE 3

STEPWISE PREDICTIONS OF KINDS OF INFORMATION SOUGHT

| Kind of Information | Predictor Variable | R | Beta Coefficient | Level of Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Friends' opinions of various brands" | Interest in Inter-Personal Discussion | .34 | .29 | .000 |
| | Comparative-Product Preference | .41 | .23 | .001 |
| | Age | .43 | -.14 | .029 |
| "Main differences between brands" | Education | .15 | -.14 | .023 |
| | Price Consciousness | .20 | .13 | .058 |
| "Available brands on the market" | Perceived-product Ambiguity | .22 | .19 | .001 |
| | Age | .30 | -.17 | .004 |
| | Social Utility | .33 | .13 | .023 |
| | Interest in Inter-personal discussion | .35 | .11 | .095 |
| "Salesperson's opinion of various brands | Perceived-product Ambiguity | .31 | .29 | .000 |
| | Social Utility | .36 | .15 | .009 |
| | Money spent on cosmetics | .37 | .12 | .088 |
| | Comparative-product preference | .39 | .12 | .075 |
| "Brands carried by a particular store" | Social Utility | .21 | .17 | .002 |
| | Interest in Inter-personal Discussion | .27 | .15 | .015 |
| | Perceived-product Ambiguity | .30 | .14 | .045 |
| "Kinds of people who buy certain brands" | Social Utility | .28 | .24 | .000 |
| | Perceived-product Ambiguity | .37 | .22 | .000 |
| | Education | .41 | -.16 | .007 |
| | Personal Exposure | .43 | .14 | .035 |

FOOTNOTES

[1]Respondents in the final sample were actually using on the average of 4.5 of these five products.

[2]Several validity checks performed by Clarke (1973) in previous studies of information seeking showed that a person's need for information correlated strongly with his actual information-seeking behavior.

[3]Similar methods of index construction were used in previous studies of information seeking (Katona and Mueller, 1955; Robinson, 1967; Newman and Staelin, 1972).

[4]A pretest had shown that those who were "less interested" than their friends tended to "disagree" with this statement.

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